

The Children's Giving Tree at Blackwell's



If your home is like mine, with every shelf sagging under the weight of reading matter, you may find it hard to imagine that some children have no books at all. These children aren't in far off Third World countries; they live in Edinburgh just like us, but they have probably never been to a library, much less a bookshop.

Many of us find huge comfort in reading when the world gets too much; for these children, the desperate circumstances of their lives can be too much every single day, but they have no escape, no other places to turn to. **The Blackwell's Giving Tree** is a way in which you can reach out to these young people, and offer them not only the magic of a book, but a book they have asked for themselves, be it a by specific author, on a particular subject, or just 'A book that I can take with me on an adventure.' (This is the wording of one of this year's tags).

Blackwell's began this project seven years ago – sales manager **James Anderson** remembers a tiny tree in a flowerpot with a few tags attached. The response was enormous, the tags were gone in just a few days – and since then the tree, and the project, have grown and grown; 'it felt' says James, (with seasonally-appropriate imagery) 'like an experiment that just snowballed.'

Yesterday, Edinburgh author **Nicola Morgan** launched the 2014 appeal; there are over 300 tags this year, each of them asking for a special book for a special child. As Nicola says, 'These children may not receive anything else this Christmas. How can you say no?'



The idea is simple; you read the tags, choose one (or lots!), find the books that the tags request and buy them. Blackwell's keeps them and kindly gift wraps them for you, before passing them on to the relevant charities – this year these include **Edinburgh Women's Aid, CHAS, Citadel Youth Centre, Edinburgh Young Carers Project** and **Action for Children**. If a child or young person has asked for a type of book rather than a named title, Blackwell's staff are there to help you find something they know will fit the bill. If you can't get into the store, you can phone or email the children's department, and once the other Blackwell's stores are ready (Edinburgh is of course ahead of the game...) you should also be able to make your donation online via the website.



We all know about running, yoga and herbal tea, but 'one of the best ways to relieve stress' says Nicola 'is to give', and she should know, she's written a book about it (*The Teenage Guide to Stress*, 2014) – isn't that great? No more dragging yourself to the gym or pretending you'd rather have some camomile concoction than a strong shot of caffeine and a cake – all you have to do is while away a nostalgic hour in Blackwell's, hand over your credit card, and come away feeling like serenity itself. Just do it quickly, before all the tags are gone and you end up having to endure something much more painful.

The Giving Tree is in Blackwell's now; if you can't find it, you're not in the Children's Department – ask at the desk. If you would like to participate but can't call in, email kirsty.smith@blackwell.co.uk or call her on 0131 622 8225.

You can also follow the appeal on Twitter [@GivingTreeEdin](https://twitter.com/GivingTreeEdin) and on [Facebook](#).